

'Medium red with fresh fruity nose . . .': doctors and viniculture in 19th century Australia

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'Medium red with fresh fruity nose' was the description used in a 1988 Society Notice to advertise the recommended wine of the month - Penfold's Dalwood Shiraz Cabernet 1984. The eponymous Penfold was Christopher Rawson, a medical practitioner who in 1844, having emigrated from Sussex and brought with him some cuttings of French vines, established a winery in the foothills of the Mount Lofty Ranges, close to Adelaide, South Australia. In recent years there has developed both a burgeoning and consuming interest in Australian wines and also a deeper study of the social history of Australian medicine. This paper seeks to combine these twin developments by reporting on a mixed vintage case of a dozen 'strongly flavoured and full-bodied' medical men who, having migrated to one of the Australian colonies, played significant roles not only in medical practice but also in the progress of viniculture. The lives and careers of these 12 medical vigneron are described in some detail, in the order of their Antipodean arrival.

Medical migration

Research in progress is revealing that approximately 2500 doctors emigrated to Australia in the 75 years following the establishment in 1788 of New South Wales as a penal colony and the first European settlement. About 2000 of these practitioners, the vast majority of whom were British-born and trained, took up permanent residence. In the early years of colonization both private practice and professional competition were limited, and the public and military appointments provided a guaranteed, if meagre, income. The introduction of large-scale and subsidized migration was to change the conditions of medical practice and to provide encouragement for medical migrants, who came to Australia for a variety of reasons, reflecting both the 'push' outwards from Britain, and also the 'pull' towards the new underpopulated colonies. Although there were certainly some fuddled incompetents and drunkards, most of these medical migrants were young, single and newly qualified. Some came to establish a new start, their initial ambitions having been frustrated, because they had found it difficult to set up in practice in Britain, being driven out by intense competition in an overcrowded profession or by a lack of finance, patronage or family connections. Others were adventurers lured by the prospects of practising in a more open and developing society, and by possible fortunes to be gained from successful gold-prospecting, sheep-farming or other commercial and entrepreneurial activities. Further medical men came out either on official service as colonial medical officers or whilst serving in the royal navy or army, to join friends and colleagues or for health reasons

(such as seeking a cure for or relief from tuberculosis and in the beliefs that a long sea voyage and exposure to a warm climate would prove beneficial). A small select band, numbering upwards of 30, arrived as involuntary migrants, transported for various misdemeanours as convicts¹.

William Redfern

William Redfern^{2,3} arrived in Sydney on 14 December 1801 as a convict. With the passing of years he was to become the leading doctor in Sydney and one of its principal citizens. Brought up at Trowbridge he had, after examination at the Company of Surgeons in London, been appointed as a surgeon's mate in the Royal Navy. In 1797, aged 19 he joined *HMS Standard*, whose crew took part in the infamous mutiny at the Nore. Having expressed a sympathy, with hindsight now properly justified, with some of the sailors' complaints related to the abominable conditions under which they served, he was tried by courtmartial, found guilty and sentenced to death. He was reprieved on account of his youth and after serving 4 years in prison his sentence was commuted and at his own request he was transported to an exile in New South Wales. He assisted the ship's surgeon on his voyage out, and on arrival was sent as assistant surgeon to the outpost on Norfolk Island to serve under the medical ex-convict James Davis. He was pardoned in June 1803 and, having gained a good medical reputation for the conduct of his duties, returned to Sydney in 1808 to work as assistant surgeon at the hospital. Since he had apparently not received any written confirmation of his London qualification he was re-examined by a panel of three medical men who found him 'qualified to exercise the profession of a Surgeon'. He thus became the first doctor to be examined and qualified in the colony.

As an emancipist the bluff and fearless Redfern encountered vehement hostility from sections of the community. Notwithstanding his acting as family doctor to Governor Lachlan Macquarie (even vaccinating his son against smallpox) and the influential Macarthur family, he was shunned by those who believed that convicts were social outcasts whose ostracism should be permanent. Thus although recommended by the Governor to fill the post of Principal Surgeon upon D'Arcy Wentworth's resignation in 1818, he was rejected in favour of James Bowman by the London authorities probably because of their distaste for the official employment of ex-convicts. Redfern, in addition to many philanthropic activities, made further contributions to the development of Australian medicine. He took on the first two Australian medical apprentices, the second of whom Henry Cowper, a clergyman's son who had emigrated

as a child, later came to London, and when he qualified MRCS in 1822 was the first practitioner to receive all his training in Australia. Redfern was also the author of a report, prepared at the governor's invitation in 1814, reviewing health conditions and particularly the high mortality on board convict ships. He proposed the appointment of experienced naval surgeons to serve on each of the convict transports. The governor forwarded the report to London, which responded promptly by appointing in 1815 as the first surgeon superintendent Bowman, the man subsequently to be appointed over Redfern as the colony's principal medical officer. Redfern's recommendation was particularly timely in that with the ending of the Napoleonic wars the Admiralty was left with a large number of naval surgeons on half-pay.

Angry and disillusioned that his many years of good service to the colony had been ignored, Redfern resigned from public medical practice upon Bowman's arrival in 1819 and devoted himself to private practice and his business interests which included a directorship of the Bank of New South Wales, and farming, the wool industry and viniculture. He visited England in 1821 as part of a delegation which succeeded in getting better recognition for emancipists. On his return trip, and for health reasons, he made a stop-over in Madeira, where he took a close interest in the cultivation of grapes. Back in New South Wales he acquired a further land grant and purchased additional estates on which he established a vineyard and so began the commercial production of wine. He later retired to Edinburgh, where aged 55 he died in 1833, leaving a large estate, including 23 000 acres. His professional skills had been highly regarded by his fellow practitioners, and he was considered to be the colony's best obstetrician. His career straddled many aspects of the colony's life, and he appears to have been the first medical man to realize that the soil and the climate favoured the commercial development of viniculture. He thus set a precedent - as a doctor and vigneron he was a pioneer.

Sir John Jamison

Sir John Jamison arrived in Sydney in 1814, after a short but illustrious career as a naval physician, to oversee the estates inherited from his father who had died in London in 1811. Born an Ulsterman in 1776 at Carrickfergus, Co Antrim, he qualified MD at St Andrews in 1808. Whilst serving with the Baltic Fleet in 1809 he was instrumental in curbing a widespread epidemic of scurvy amongst the Swedish navy - an effort for which he was rewarded by King Charles XIII of Sweden with a knighthood, to which honour was added that of knight bachelor created by the Prince Regent in 1813. His father, following education at the University of Dublin and joining the navy in 1777, had arrived with the First Fleet in 1788, whilst serving as surgeon's mate on the *Sirius*. He subsequently served at Norfolk Island and Sydney in the colonial medical service, latterly as Surgeon-General. He published, in the *Sydney Gazette* during 1804, the first medical paper (on smallpox) to be printed in Australia, and he was one of the officials involved in 1808 with the deposition of Governor Bligh. He was deeply involved with trade in spirits, wheat, pork and sandalwood, and amassed a large fortune and estate, which his son John came out to manage. John himself soon became interested in public and official matters, and became established

as a landowner and constitutional reformer. He was a man of strong views, which left him alternately in and out of favour with successive governors. Together with his friend, William Charles Wentworth, he agitated for representative government and trial by jury.

In 1825 he built near Penrith, New South Wales, a stylish country house named 'Regentville' in honour of the former Prince Regent, later King George IV. Here in addition to constructing an irrigation system and a woollen mill, he established extensive vineyards - originally under the superintendence of a man he brought from Madeira but later under the care of a German immigrant. He had further interests in bloodstock and horse-racing, and was the founder and president of the first turf, racing and jockey clubs. Renowned for his production of cheese and tobacco he was for many years President of the Agricultural and Horticultural Society of New South Wales. He lived the life of an English squire and like many of his contemporaries he was the father of a number of illegitimate children. In February 1844 he married his housekeeper who had borne him seven children - but four months later he died, leaving not the massive fortune he once possessed but a more modest estate, following his losses resulting from the failure of the Bank of Australia.

Viniculture in South Australia

In addition to colonial expansion within New South Wales, additional settlements were developed in Van Diemen's Land (Tasmania) in 1804, the Swan River (Western Australia) in 1829, Port Phillip (Melbourne and Victoria) in 1835, and Adelaide (South Australia) in 1836. These developments brought further opportunities for medical practitioners. Thus it was that Alexander Charles Kelly⁴, a Presbyterian born in 1811 in Dunbar who qualified at Edinburgh (LRCS 1831 and MD 1832), arrived at Adelaide in March 1840. He had previously served for about 8 years as a surgeon on board the East India Company's ships plying to India and China. He stayed only briefly in South Australia, since following the discovery of copper in the colony he returned to Britain to recruit settlers and workers for the new mines. He visited France and Germany in this capacity, but having been impressed by the possibilities for viniculture as a result of favourable soil and weather conditions in South Australia, he also studied the growth and manufacturing processes adopted by vignerons in these countries.

Kelly returned to take up permanent residence in Adelaide, and planted a 30-acre plot of vine cuttings, naming his property 'Trinity'. He produced burgundy and port wines, and visited New South Wales vineyards to research his book *The Vine in Australia*, published in Melbourne in 1861 - in the same year he purchased a further estate in McLaren Vale, and there planted what became known as the Tintara vineyard. A further volume *Winegrowing in Australia* was published in Adelaide in 1867, and he visited London in 1871 to establish a market for his wines, appointing Burgoyne, with a cellar in Old Bond Street, as his agent. Despite his overtures, however, the market for his wines proved insufficient, and his company went into liquidation. He retired in 1876 and died shortly afterwards aged 66 years. It is uncertain as to precisely what extent he practised medicine in South Australia following his registration in January 1845 as the 12th practitioner on the colony's list.

Henry John Lindeman

Henry John Lindeman sailed from Plymouth as surgeon on board the *Teresa* which arrived in Melbourne in July 1840, before going on to Sydney. A doctor's son he was born at Esher on 21 September 1811, and qualified MRCS on 7 February 1834 after studying at Bart's. Initially he had served as surgeon on board a naval hospital ship moored at Greenwich, and then on the *Marquis of Camden* on an 18-month voyage to India and China. Back in England he married at Southampton in February 1840, but being dissatisfied with the prospect of facing married life as a ship's surgeon, he and his new bride decided to emigrate. They settled in Patterson River, where he set up in medical practice, having registered with the Medical Board of New South Wales. In 1843 he bought an estate at Cawarra, where he established his first vineyard and set in motion his plans for wine-making, derived from observations and experiences obtained during an earlier visit to France and Germany. A disastrous fire on 13 September 1851 destroyed not only his cellars but also his stores of 4000 gallons of wine. To recoup his losses he temporarily left the colony, joining the exodus flocking to the Victorian goldfields, where he worked both as a doctor and as a prospector. He soon made money and returned to Cawarra to rebuild his winery. He became President of the Hunter Valley Vineyard Association, serving twice in 1863 and 1870, and in the latter year extended his winegrowing to Corowa in the Rutherglen district of Northern Victoria, whilst concentrating his bottling in Sydney. Although he died on 23 May 1881, his name lives on today with Lindeman's wines.

Western Australia

The first medical vigneron in Western Australia was John Ferguson⁵, who was born in Dundee about 1800 and qualified LRCSEdin in 1822. Between 1828 and 1835 he practised at Auchtermuchty, Fifeshire. After marrying in 1838 he arrived in the *Trusty* at Leschenault on 6 December 1842, as one of the founders of the new settlement of Australind. Although he had intended abandoning medicine for the more lucrative sphere of farming, his medical skills were soon in demand, and in 1847 he moved to Perth to become Colonial Surgeon for Western Australia. He was the first doctor in the colony to use chloroform as an anaesthetic, during the course of amputation. In 1859 he bought the Houghton Estate and developed vineyards there, which brought him international repute for the quality of their wines. He retired as Colonial Surgeon in 1872, having two years previously become the first President of the Medical Board of Western Australia. Although he died in Perth on 11 September 1883, his son (then aged 84) was still running the Houghton Estate in 1935, and the Houghton tradition continues today.

Christopher Rawson Penfold

Another former Bart's student, qualifying LSA in 1833, was Christopher Rawson Penfold, who arrived on the *Taglioni* in Adelaide on 18 June 1844. Born in 1811 as the son of the Vicar of Steyning, Sussex, he was between 1838 and 1844 in practice in Brighton. He took up land some 4 miles from Adelaide and immediately planted the vine cuttings which he had brought with him from France. His vinicultural interests evidently remained predominant, since he

did not register with the Medical Board of South Australia until the late 1850s. For a time he appears to have lived in Victoria, where he was registered from 1859 to 1863. Back in South Australia he continued the dual practice of medicine and viniculture up until his death on 25 March 1870, when his wine stocks amounted to 107 000 gallons, that is about an eighth of the total annual production in South Australia. Originally his output was in port and sherry, but he later diversified into claret and riesling. His business was continued by his widow and son-in-law, and the family extended their interests to include Victoria, New South Wales and New Zealand. The Penfold name is well to the fore in the presentday wine trade, and Penfolds now also own the Lindeman wineries.

Another medical vigneron in South Australia was Anton Sotolowsky, on his arrival in Adelaide in December 1848 a 30-year old Polish emigre. A Lutheran, he had sailed from Hamburg, having obtained his MD (possibly from Vienna). He was first registered with the medical board in January 1851 and was at the time the only Polish-speaking practitioner in the colony. He married and settled in the Barossa Valley district, where in 1857 he purchased land on which he began to grow grapes. Sadly his vintage was short-lived, since he died in 1862 following a riding accident.

Charles McKay and

Louis Lawrence Smith

Two of the 1852 crop of medical immigrants, Charles McKay and Louis Lawrence Smith were destined to become vintners. The former, born at Kilrea in Ulster in 1822, studied in Edinburgh, and qualified LRCSEdin and MD St Andrews in 1843. After a tour of duty as a surgeon in the service of the East India Company he migrated to Sydney. He was in time to become President of both the New South Wales Medical and Pharmaceutical boards, a surgical consultant at Sydney Hospital, and examiner in medicine at the University of Sydney. He established a vineyard at his Minchin property, wines from which won him medals at the 1879 Sydney International Exhibition. He died in March 1893.

Smith, the 22-year-old son of a theatrical impressario, arrived in Melbourne in the *Oriental* on 11 December 1852, having studied for 5 years as apprentice to the surgeon Sir Thomas Longmore and then at the Ecole de Médecine in Paris and at Westminster Hospital, and qualified LSA. Following a brief trip to the Victorian goldfields he opened a surgery in Bourke Street, Melbourne. He was himself something of a showman, advertising extensively (spending up to £3000 annually) and adopting a populist approach by publishing a medical almanac and numerous papers and pamphlets. He played a prominent role in professional, commercial and political life, serving four terms as an elected member of the state's legislative assembly. Although he was acquitted in 1858 on a charge of having procured an illegal abortion, his reputation was damaged. He owned farms, racing stables and also indulged in winegrowing and wine-production at Nunawading, Victoria. He was President of the Victorian Winegrowers' Association in 1883. He was registered in Victoria from 1853 until 1901. He was a larger than life character - the father of 15 children, he can perhaps be described as 'full-blooded, spicy and smoky'.

August Muller

August Muller, born in 1828 in Westphalia, Germany, came to South Australia in 1855 after qualifying MD and ChD at Giessen in the previous year. He was another multi-faceted practitioner who combined medical practice with viticulture. He moved to Yackandandah, Victoria, where he lived and worked until his death in 1898. He was a leader of the spiritualist movement in Victoria, and became widely known as the originator of a proposal to cure snake-bite by the use of strychnine in the form of hypodermic injection⁶.

Alfred Robert Waylen

Alfred Robert Waylen was born in Western Australia in 1833 but went to England in 1843 to be educated at the City of London School and at Bart's. He obtained the dual qualifications of MRCS and LSA in 1856 and his MD from St Andrews 2 years later, in the process becoming the first native-born Western Australian, 'sandgroper', to obtain a medical degree. He took up a post as colonial medical officer at Guildford, Western Australia in 1859, and succeeded the medical vigneron John Ferguson, as Colonial Surgeon in 1872 - a post he held until 1895. He planted vines on his Garden Hill property and established a wine-producing business. On his retirement from public medical duties he established the Darlington vineyards, which he cultivated until his death, aged 68 years on 10 January 1901.

Thomas Henry Fiaschi

The final specimen in this 12 bottle pack is Thomas Henry Fiaschi, a particularly flamboyant character who, before completing his medical studies in Italy, came out in 1874 to try his luck in prospecting in the goldfields of Northern Queensland. Born to an English mother on 31 May 1853 in Florence, he studied at the local university where his father was professor of mathematics. He eloped with an Irish Catholic nun, whom he married at a congregational ceremony in Sydney in February 1876. He returned to his native city, obtaining the degrees of MD and ChD in 1877. He came back to Australia to assume medical practice at Windsor, New South Wales, and to develop the Tizzana vineyard on the Hawkesbury River, where he introduced the chardonnay grape to Australia. He moved to Sydney and later became an army surgeon, serving in the British army in the Sudan, the Italian army in Abyssinia, the British army again in the Boer War in which he was awarded the DSO, and both the Australian Imperial Force and the Italian army during World War I. A well-read man with many cultural interests, he died in Sydney in 1927 at the house of his son, Piero, a specialist in genito-urinary disease.

Medicine and viticulture: dual practice

It is apparent that many Australian doctors grew vines and produced their own wine⁷, even if this was in many instances for their own or local consumption. Other medical men, including the 12 described in the above vignettes, developed business interests in the wine industry. What prompted these doctors to establish and maintain vineyards? Two possible explanations need to be considered - firstly the medicinal use of wine, and secondly the need for medical men to diversify their interests in order to

make a living. Wine was used and prescribed by doctors as a tonic, for the treatment of anaemia, or as a tranquilizing agent - why not therefore, particularly in the country districts, grow one's own supply in parallel with a medicinal or herb garden? Since many doctors lived and practised in small rural communities and away from the main centres of population there were often problems in finding a sufficiently large clientèle with the ability to pay for medical services. Thus many country doctors combined medical practice with other trades and businesses, particularly with regard to farming and horticultural interests. The availability of large land grants also facilitated this development. Being trained in science, many medical men had acquired a basic knowledge of the pharmaceutical properties of various plants - to this they added an understanding of viticulture. A smaller number of practitioners, mostly those practising in the cities, were able to profit from the financial rewards derived from medicine, and to use this wealth to buy country estates for themselves, and to expand their commercial activities into such areas as wine-production.

There were undoubtedly many diverse reasons why Australia's nascent medical profession took a particular interest in wine-production. There is however perhaps a lesson to be learned from the experience of Frederic Norton Manning, who became the Medical Superintendent of the Gladesville Asylum (situated 8 miles from Sydney). Faced with the needs to provide work therapy and meaningful outdoor activities for his patients, and to balance his budgets, he established a vineyard at his asylum in 1870, and set out to generate income to set against the increasing costs facing his institution. The motives of other medical vignerons were less altruistic or philanthropic, but the testimony to their success as commercial ventures is found in the continuing and present existence of the Antipodean vintages produced at the Penfold, Lindeman and Houghton wineries. Like their medical founders they are ageing well, offering us as they do 'a brimful of flavour, an irresistible delight and a mature and distinct character'.

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